

A moving experience

1 READING & SPEAKING

- a The guidebook series *The Rough Guide* has published a book called *25 Wonders of the World*. Think of five places, sights, or monuments that you would put in it. Compare your list with a partner.
- b Read the article once. Why is it called 'My 25,000 Wonders of the World'?

My 25,000 Wonders of the World

The coaches at the Uluru Sunset Viewing Area were parked three deep. Guides were putting up tables and setting out wine and snacks. Ten minutes to go. Are we ready? Five minutes, folks. Got your cameras? OK, here it comes...

Whether an American backpacker or a wealthy traveller, Danish, British, or French, we all saw that sunset over Uluru, or Ayers Rock, in what seems to be the prescribed tourist manner: mouth full of corn chips, glass full of Château Somewhere, and a loved one posing in a photo's foreground, as the all-time No 1 Australian icon behind us glowed briefly red.

Back on the coach, our guide declared our sunset to be 'pretty good', although not the best she'd witnessed in her six years. Behind me, Adam, a student from Manchester, reinserted his iPod earphones: 'Well, that's enough of that rock'. Indeed. Shattered from getting up at five in order to see Uluru at dawn, I felt empty and bored. What was the point? What made this rock the definitive sunset rock event? Why had we come here? Well, I suppose my sons would remember it always. Except they'd missed the magical moment while they checked out a rival tour group's snack table, which had better crisps.

So now I've visited four of the '25 Wonders of the World', as decreed by Rough Guides. And I think this will be the last. While in my heart I can see myself wandering enchanted through China's Forbidden City, in my head I know I would be standing grumpily at the back of a group listening to some Imperial Palace Tour Guide. At the Grand Canyon I would be getting angry with tourists watching it through their cameras – eyes are not good enough, since they lack a recording facility.

As we become richer and consumer goods are more widely affordable, and satisfy us only briefly before becoming obsolete, we turn to travel to provide us with 'experiences'. These will endure, set us apart from stay-at-home people and, maybe, fill our lives with happiness and meaning. Books with helpful titles like *1,000 Places to See Before You Die* are best-sellers. I'd bet many backpacks

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on the Machu Picchu Inca Trail are filled with copies, with little ticks pencilled in the margins after each must-see sight has been visited. Travel is now the biggest industry on the planet, bigger than armaments or pharmaceuticals. And yet viewing the main sight of any destination is rarely the highlight of a trip. Mostly it sits there on your itinerary like a duty visit to a dull relative. The guilt of not visiting the Sistine Chapel, because we preferred to stay in a bar drinking limoncello, almost spoils a weekend in Rome.

In Queensland, the Great Barrier Reef reproached us. How could we travel 15,000 miles without seeing it? How would we explain back home that we were too lazy, and preferred to stay playing a ball game in our hotel pool? In the end we went to the reef and it was fine. But it won't rank highly in the things I'll never forget about Australia. Like the fact that the banknotes are made of waterproof plastic: how gloriously Australian is that? Even after a day's surfing, the \$50 note you left in your surfing shorts is still OK to buy you beer! And the news item that during a recent tsunami warning, the surfers at Bondi Beach refused to leave the sea: what, and miss the ride of their lives? Or the stern warning at the hand luggage X-ray machine at Alice Springs airport: 'No jokes must be made whilst being processed by this facility' – to forestall, no doubt, disrespectful Aussie comments: 'You won't find the bomb, mate. It's in my suitcase.'

The more I travel, the clearer it seems that the truth of a place is in the tiny details of everyday life, not in its most glorious statues or scenery. Put down your camera, throw away your list, the real wonders of the world number infinitely more than 25.

c Read the article again. Then answer the questions with a partner.

- 1 What do you think the author means by 'the prescribed tourist manner' in 1.7? Does she think it's a good thing?
- 2 What were her main emotions after seeing the sunset?
- 3 Why does she think that Uluru is probably the last 'wonder of the world' she will see?
- 4 What kind of tourists is she criticizing when she says 'eyes are not good enough...' in 1.26?
- 5 What does she say that a lot of backpackers carry with them nowadays? Why?
- 6 What does she compare visiting the main tourist sights to? Why?
- 7 What does she mean by 'the Great Barrier Reef reproached us'?
- 8 What three aspects of Australia did she find really memorable? Why?

d Talk to a partner.

Do you agree with the author's view about famous tourist sights?

- 1 Have you ever...?
 - been to see a famous sight and thought it was overrated
 - been to see a famous sight which lived up to your expectations
 - felt guilty about not seeing a sight when you were on holiday somewhere
 - been disappointed at not being able to see a famous sight
- 2 Think of the last place you visited as a tourist. Can you think of a 'tiny detail of everyday life' that made the place or the moment special?
- 3 What 'real wonders of the world' would you recommend to people visiting your country / town?

2 VOCABULARY & SPEAKING

travel and tourism

a Find words from the text in 1 which mean...

- 1 _____ a person who travels cheaply carrying their equipment and clothes in a bag they carry on their back.
- 2 _____ an interesting place in a town or city often visited by tourists.
- 3 _____ the place where you are going to.
- 4 _____ a plan of a journey including the route and the places that you visit.
- 5 _____ the natural features of an area, e.g. mountains, valleys, rivers, or forests.

b p.165 Vocabulary Bank *Travel and tourism*.

c Do the questionnaire with a partner. Which alternative would you choose in each case, and why? Try to use the expressions below.

Expressing preferences

I'd prefer to...	I (definitely) wouldn't...
I'd (much) rather... (than...)	Given the choice, I'd...
I'd go for option b, because...	If it was up to me, I'd...



What kind of a traveller are you?

- 1 **You are in Naples, Italy, for work, and you have one free day. You can either...**
 - a go on a day trip to Pompeii, which is about an hour away.
 - b spend the day shopping, walking, and getting to know the city.
 - c stay in your hotel, go to the pool, and have a great meal.
- 2 **Your family are planning a holiday. Which would you try and persuade them to choose?**
 - a Going on a safari in Botswana, with accommodation in tents.
 - b Renting a villa on a lively but rather touristy Greek island.
 - c A package holiday to the United Kingdom, with several excursions to the main sights included.
- 3 **You and three friends want to go away for a short holiday together. The possibilities are...**
 - a a three-day city break in a foreign city, staying at a cheap hotel.
 - b three days in a luxury spa hotel in your country.
 - c a week camping somewhere off the beaten track with beautiful scenery.
- 4 **You have to go on a business trip from London to San Francisco which involves a long-haul flight. There are two possible itineraries:**
 - a an economy-class flight which leaves very early in the morning, with a 24-hour stopover in New York. (Flying time: London–New York 7.5 hours; New York–San Francisco 6.5 hours)
 - b a business-class flight which leaves at midday, but with no stopover. (Flying time: 13 hours)
- 5 **You and a friend really want to visit Vietnam, which you have heard is very beautiful. You can either...**
 - a book a package holiday through a travel agent, including guided tours of famous sights.
 - b go backpacking, organizing your flight beforehand, but finding accommodation as you go.
 - c buy a good guidebook and organize the trip yourself, booking hotels and transport on the internet.
- 6 **You are booking a flight with a low-cost airline to a major city, where you are going to spend the weekend with some friends. Apart from the flight, would you also...?**
 - a take out insurance
 - b pay extra to offset your carbon footprint
 - c pay extra to check in a suitcase



d Look at your partner's answers again. What kind of traveller do you think he / she is?

3 6.1 SONG 🎵 I Wish I Could Go Travelling Again